

# Egress Windows For Single Family Dwellings



## CITY OF FARGO BUILDING INSPECTION DEPARTMENT

The State of North Dakota requires that you call [1-800-795-0555](tel:1-800-795-0555) at least two business days before you dig.

This handout does not address any covenants or easements assigned to the property, nor does it relieve you of code compliance with items which may not have been included from the 2003 International Residential Code (IRC).

## POLICY ON EGRESS WINDOW REQUIREMENTS PERTINENT TO REMODELING OF EXISTING RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

The following statements represent our departmental position on the above subject. If at any time you are unclear as to the application of this policy in a specific situation, please direct your questions to me. In all other eventualities, use these policy statements as your guidelines for field application of the pertinent building code requirements.

1. Windows in existence are presumed to have met the building code requirements at the time of their installation.
2. Replacements of windows with windows of the same size (openable area) may be accomplished without requiring that the present day egress window requirements be met. This statement is based on 2000 International Code, which allows for maintenance of existing buildings.
3. Windows which are to be replaced with windows which will required a larger rough opening will be required to be replaced with windows meeting the present day requirements for both egress and natural light and ventilation.
4. Windows which are to be replaced with windows which will have a smaller openable area will not be permitted.
5. In all cases where window replacement is anticipated which might be affected by this policy, the owner or owner's representative will be advised by the permit issuer that egress windows are strongly recommended even though they might not be required in their specific project.
6. Windows discovered in residential projects permitted since the adoption of the 1988 edition of the building code which do not comply with the egress window requirements will, without exception, be required to be changed to complying windows.

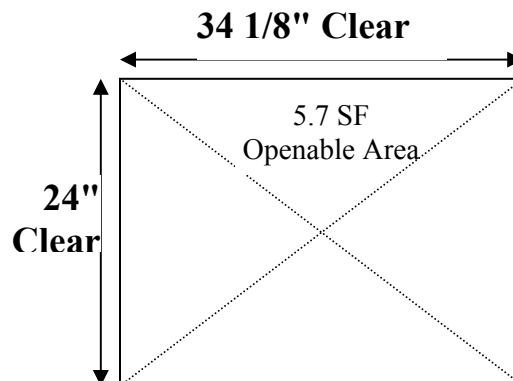
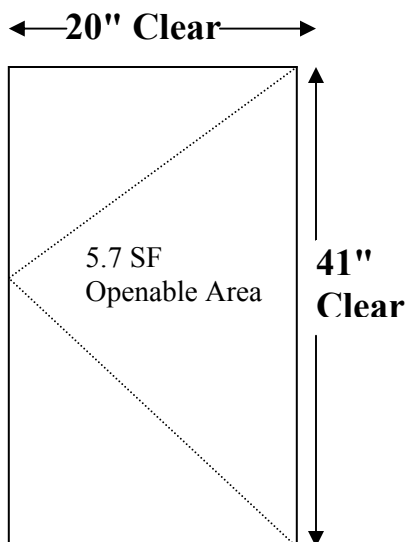
Ron C. Strand  
Head of Inspections

## **SECTION R310 - EMERGENCY ESCAPE AND RESCUE OPENINGS**

**R310.1 Emergency escape and rescue required.** Basements with habitable space and every sleeping room shall have at least one operable emergency escape and rescue window or exterior door for emergency escape and rescue. Where openings are provided as a means of escape and rescue they shall have a sill height of not more than 44 inches above the floor (48 inches if below grade in a single family dwelling). Where a door opening having a threshold below the adjacent ground elevation serves as an emergency escape and rescue opening and is provided with a bulkhead enclosure, the bulkhead enclosure shall comply with Section R310.3. The net, clear opening dimensions required by this section shall be obtained by the normal operation of the window or door opening from the inside. Escape and rescue window openings with a finished sill height below the adjacent ground elevation shall be provided with a window well in accordance with Section R310.2.

**R310.1.1 Minimum opening area.** All emergency escape and rescue openings shall have a minimum net clear opening of 5.7 square feet.

**Exception:** Grade floor openings shall have a minimum net clear opening of 5 square feet.



**Minimum size window for  
20" clear width**

**Minimum size window for  
24" clear width**

**R310.1.2 Minimum opening height.** The minimum net clear opening height shall be 24 inches.

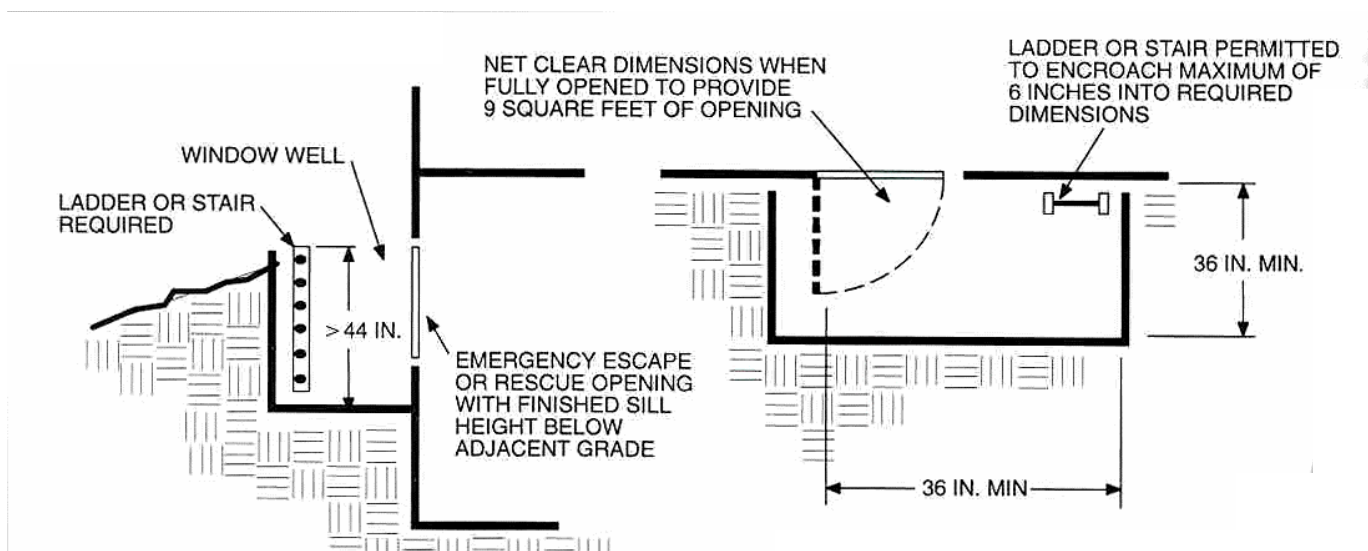
**R310.1.3 Minimum opening width.** The minimum net clear opening width shall be 20 inches.

**R310.1.4 Operational constraints.** Emergency escape and rescue openings shall be operational from the inside of the room without the use of keys or tools.

### **R310.2 - Window Well**

**R310.2** Window wells required for emergency escape and rescue shall have horizontal dimensions that allow the door or window of the emergency escape and rescue opening to be fully opened. The horizontal dimensions of the window well shall provide a minimum net clear area of 9 square feet with a minimum horizontal projection and width of 36 inches.

**Exception:** The ladder or steps required by Section R310.2.1 shall be permitted to encroach a maximum of 6 inches into the required dimensions of the window well.



**Local Amendment Section R310** *“Exception: Below grade emergency escape and rescue window may have a maximum sill height of 48 inches.”*

**R310.2.1 Ladder and steps.** Window wells with a vertical depth greater than 44 inches below the adjacent ground level shall be equipped with a permanently

affixed ladder or steps usable with the window in the fully open position. Ladders or steps required by this section shall not be required to comply with Sections R314 and R315. Ladders or rungs shall have an inside width of at least 12 inches shall project at least 3 inches from the wall and shall be spaced not more than 18 inches on center vertically for the full height of the window well.

***Local Amendment Section R310.2.1*** *Install a minimum 30" X 16" permanently attached platform, in the window well, that will reduce the vertical depth of the window well to no more than 42" below the top of the window well and that will not impede the operation of the window."*

**R310.4 Bars, grills, covers and screens.** Bars, grills, covers, screens or similar devices are permitted to be placed over emergency escape and rescue openings, bulkhead enclosures, or window wells that serve such openings, provided the minimum net clear opening size complies with Sections R310.1.1 to R310.1.3, and such devices shall be releasable or removable from the inside without the use of a key, tool or force greater than that which is required for normal operation of the escape and rescue opening.